

Inspection report for Priory Children's Centre

Local authority	Kingston upon Hull
Inspection number	367858
Inspection dates	12-13 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Jean-Marie Blakeley

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Miss C Smith
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Priory Primary School Priory Road Hull East Yorkshire HU5 5RU
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Linked school if applicable	Priory Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY374255 Butterflies Pre-School & Priory Kids EY282342 Teeny Tots

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and representatives from Hull local authority. Inspectors also met with a number of partners from health, education and voluntary organisations. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Priory Children's Centre is situated in the Derringham ward, in the west area of Hull. It is a phase two children's centre and was designated in 2008. The centre is on the site of Priory Primary School and the headteacher of the school is the designated head of centre. Governance is provided by the local authority, governing body and advisory board. The site also includes a doctor's surgery, an adult learning centre and a private day nursery.

The centre provides the full core offer of services and is part of the 'West of Hull Children's Centre Consortium' that includes three other children's centres. Two coordinators manage the provision of all four centres supported by staff who work across centres. Health services, such as antenatal clinics are delivered on-site.

The centre serves a residential area where unemployment rates are high. There are some local pockets of deprivation close to the centre with two of the eight wards in the reach area being in the 30 per cent most deprived nationally. The majority of local families are of White British heritage.

The centre does not have data on the percentage of children who are living in households where no one is working or the number of low income families in receipt of family tax credit.

Children enter day-care provision with skills and abilities that are slightly lower than those found nationally. Two private providers offer day-care provision. Butterflies Pre-School and Priory Kids is situated on site and provides day-care for children from two to five years and an after-school club. Teeny Tots is based half a mile from the centre and provides day-care for children aged from birth to five years. Butterflies Pre-School and Priory Kids was subject to its own inspection in September 2010 and Teeny Tots was inspected in March 2008. The reports can be found at www.Ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

4

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

4

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Priory Children’s Centre in meeting the needs of users and in demonstrating the capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate. Significant local authority budget cuts have led to a high number of staff, management and service reductions. The range of provision and care, guidance and support for families has been reduced without consultation with users or adequate alternative arrangements. As a result, outcomes for users and the quality of provision have declined and some vulnerable families do not receive the services they need. The lack of communication and consultation with users has resulted in many families expressing dissatisfaction with the current provision. However, the continued partnership with health professionals has ensured that families benefit satisfactorily from on-site health services.

The wide-ranging and rapid change of the centre’s management and staff has led to the centre’s weak understanding of the local community’s needs. The centre meets the statutory requirements for equality and diversity. However, the centre is not sure who lives in the area and is unable to identify the most vulnerable groups. As a consequence, the centre is unable to target its provision to those families and groups most in need. Leaders do not analyse management information or data related to outcomes within the centre’s reach to evaluate the impact of its work or to set precise and measurable targets for improvement. The centre does not sufficiently

seek or analyse the views of users in order to develop the provision. The advisory board recognises that it does not meet the guidelines for the governance of children's centres as the head of centre is also the chair of the board. Although some users are board members, the centre has not given them sufficient support or training to develop their effectiveness. The lack of precise data and targets for improvement makes it difficult for the governing body, including the advisory board, to hold leaders to account for the centre's performance.

The centre's procedures ensure users' safety. Parents, carers and children report feeling safe at the centre. Safeguarding regulations are met and staff receive suitable training and know what action to take in the event of a safeguarding issue. Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information are known and staff cooperate with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure that:
 - the centre has sufficient management information in order to plan and evaluate its provision adequately and to set precise and measurable improvement targets
 - the centre's management and staffing arrangements are adequate in order to provide services to meet the needs of users and improve outcomes.

- The centre should:
 - appoint an appropriate person, who is not the head of centre, to chair the advisory board
 - identify and prioritise its key vulnerable groups in order to target its services more effectively
 - seek the views of users to develop the range of provision and support them to become more involved in decision making
 - evaluate all services based on the analysis of outcomes data and users' feedback.

How good are outcomes for users?

4

Attendance at the centre's health clinics helps families to develop a satisfactory understanding of health. The centre is aware that the number of mothers who breastfeed their babies is low and too few women give up smoking during pregnancy, but there is little precise data available from the health authority, for the centre to measure its effectiveness in dealing with these issues.

There is satisfactory use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Children in

care or on child protection plans receive good support which helps them progress. Families benefit from home safety visits, advice and free safety equipment. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to keep their families safe. One mother said, 'I was given free safety equipment such as a fire guard, stair gate and cupboard locks which help keep my children safe'. However, the response to some families needing support or advice is too slow because of recent staff changes.

Children in day care make good progress in their personal and social skills, and their communication, language and literacy skills. These gains are the result of well-planned and enjoyable learning. Parents and carers engaging in adult learning enjoy their sessions, improve their confidence and some achieve qualifications. The centre does not have evidence to demonstrate the number of users improving their employment opportunities by gaining qualifications through adult education or employment guidance.

Children's behaviour is good and relationships between families and staff are respectful. However, the centre does not adequately support and encourage users to make a positive contribution to its work although some users interviewed are keen to do so. The centre has not established a 'Parents' Forum' to encourage users to make a contribution or a volunteer programme to enable them to develop work skills.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	4
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

4

Careful and effective assessment of children's needs in day care has a positive impact on their outcomes. Health and adult education professionals make satisfactory use of assessment to plan support for users. However, the centre has not developed systems to identify the needs of those families not currently engaging with them and does not analyse assessments of users' needs to

effectively plan a range of provision.

Children’s learning and development in the day care is good. Children in day care receive good care and guidance. Effective transition arrangements into the school enable children to move on to the next stage of their learning. Adults interviewed enjoy coming to the few courses held in the centre, gain confidence and develop knowledge and skills. However, due to uncertainty about the continuation of the centre, activities which users enjoyed, such as ‘Stay and Play’, were closed. The centre’s current range of services does not meet users’ needs. The centre has been too slow to consult with users and provide appropriate activities and sessions. As a result, users lack sufficient learning and development opportunities and alternative arrangements following recent changes are not good enough to ensure improvement. For example, some users said they would not attend future sessions planned in other centres because they had to travel out of the area and would not know people at the new venues. The number of families registered with the centre is satisfactory but participation rates, other than with health services, are low because of the limited services provided. The centre’s reduced opening hours, of one full day and four mornings, does not fully meet the families’ needs.

The centre’s ability to identify and provide one-to-one support and home visits is limited. Parents and carers who previously had good support from the centre spoke highly of the friendly care and guidance they had received. Users expressed their concerns to inspectors that the level of support appreciated by them is no longer available. There is insufficient information provided in the centre about where to go to for help on such matters as domestic violence. Signage at the centre fails to advise users about who they can contact when the centre is closed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	4
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	4
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	4
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	4

How effective are the leadership and management?

4

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. However, the centre recognises that it does not meet governance guidelines because the head of centre is

also chair of the advisory board. Although some parents and carers are board members, they have not had sufficient support and training to be fully effective members and communicate their views. There are links between service provision and strategic planning; however, the provision is not based on users' needs. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and have good individual skills. However, reduced resources mean staff no longer meet the needs of the local community.

Accommodation is attractive and welcoming but is not well-utilised. The declining outcomes and inadequate quality of provision means the centre does not provide satisfactory value for money.

Leaders and managers are suitably motivated to secure improvements but have only very recently taken up their responsibilities. Their lack of local knowledge means they are not effective in directing the centre's efforts. They are unaware of the centre's relative strengths and areas for development; who the key target groups are; and the challenging factors influencing outcomes. Management information and data are not collected and analysed effectively to enable precise target setting and careful evaluation of outcomes.

Although the centre fulfils its statutory duties for equality and diversity, its lack of knowledge of local users and families within the centre's reach means it is not targeting vulnerable or key groups. There is insufficient analysis of the participation of workless families, teenage parents, children and adults with disabilities, minority ethnic groups or of the centre's impact on community cohesion. Working parents and carers have limited access to services. Crèche facilities, sometimes only offered off-site, restrict some parents' and carers' access to learning and development opportunities.

Safeguarding is satisfactory. Policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users on the site are effectively implemented and updated. The centre demonstrates satisfactory practice across all areas of its work. Staff have a clear understanding about their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. The centre collaborates effectively with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. The centre has clear systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff.

Self-evaluation lacks rigour. The local authority, governing body and advisory board monitor and evaluate the work of the centre but this is not effective. Evaluation lacks challenge as it has insufficient focus on measurable outcomes. The centre does not have systems to evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision on improving outcomes for children and adults.

Partnerships with other services, particularly health, contribute to outcomes for users. Services with partners are mostly integrated. However, a recent change to the centre's internal staffing arrangements results in a lack of cohesive provision for users. The partnership between the school and day care enables good transition arrangements for children. The centre does not adequately seek or make use of

feedback from users to develop the range of provision. Those engaging with the provision are dissatisfied with the reduction of services.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	4
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	4
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	4
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	4
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	4
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	4

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Some of the information from the most recent Ofsted inspection of Butterflies Pre-School and Priory Kids has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in the report.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Priory Children's Centre on 12–13 May 2011. We judged the centre as inadequate overall.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke with us. You told us you enjoy coming to the centre but all the recent changes means that it no longer fully meets your needs. Your views were very helpful. We found that you do not have enough opportunities to learn and develop your skills.

You told us that all the staff are friendly and that family support staff used to give you good support. However, some of you don't know what will happen now some staff have left. You said that you used to enjoy coming to sessions but most were stopped because of the funding cuts. You are unhappy because you were not consulted about the many changes including the closure of the centre four afternoons each week. You told us that you do not want to attend other centres because you do not know the people and you cannot travel there.

We have asked the local authority to ensure there are enough staff to provide the services you need and that they make sure the centre has enough information about your community so they can plan better provision for you.

We found that staff have a satisfactory understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained. The buildings are secure and reception staff are careful in checking the centre's visitors. You said that you feel your children are well cared for and that they are safe at the centre. We found that health professionals have continued to provide appropriate services during this difficult time.

Your children enjoy attending day care and they make a good transition into school. Those of you attending adult learning in the centre enjoy learning and some have gone on to employment. We have asked the centre to make sure it asks you what it is you want to learn and do before they plan programmes.

The centre meets its legal requirements for equality and diversity. However, the centre is not sure who lives in the area and is unable to identify the most vulnerable groups. Therefore, it is not targeting its provision at those who may be the most disadvantaged. Inspectors have identified this area of work as a high priority for the centre.

We would also like the centre to help more of you to volunteer, train and qualify to help you build the necessary knowledge and skills to gain future employment.

Your children behave well and you all get on well together in the centre. Some of you are becoming involved in the advisory board but are unsure about the changes. Many of you feel the centre does not really listen to what you want. We have recommended that the centre provides support and training to parents and carers so you can be more involved in decision making about the centre. We have also

recommended that the advisory board has someone else, not the head of centre, as its chair, so that the board can really challenge the centre to improve.

We recommend that the advisory board, local authority and centre staff monitor the outcomes more closely, listen to you and really challenge the centre to improve further. We recommend that the local authority makes sure there are sufficient staff available to coordinate and deliver services. The advisory board and the centre staff really want to improve the centre but because they are new, they do not yet know all the things they need to do.

Thank you very much for sharing your views with us. We wish you all the best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.